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Note on the Collective Storehouses of the Western High Atlas

(Tribes of the Ida ou Mahmoud and the Seksaoua)

[Note sur les magasins collectifs du Haut-Atlas Occidental
(Tribus des Ida ou Mahmoud et des Seksaoua)]

Pierre Dupas

Paris: 1929
Hespéris, Archives berbères et Bulletin de l'Institut
des Hautes-Études marocaines
Vol. 9, pp. 303-322

Translated from the French by Helen Bluhm

Human Relations Area Files
1973

[Title page]

343 712 [114] /303/ In the course of his travels carried out from 1902 to 1907 in the land of the Seksaoua and the Ida ou Mahmoud in the Haut Atlas Occidental /Western High Atlas/, Brives pointed out the existence of collective storehouses used in these high valleys by the Berbères /Berbers/ (1).

[113]

1. Brives, Voyages au Maroc /Travels in Morocco/, Algiers, 1909.

[178] While these fortresses, to which one gives the name of agadir and which are intended for keeping the montagnards' provisions of grains and fruits, have almost all disappeared in the rest of the country, they have indeed stood intact to our day in this region neighboring the summits.

114 121 343 712 [648] After the submission of these tribes to France in 1927, it was possible for us, in the course of rounds carried out to reorganize the local command, to visit the villages and the agadirs. Without trying to make here a complete study of this institution of collective storehouses, difficult to carry out in too limited a time, it seemed interesting to us to describe the appearance and the arrangement of these curious constructions.

343 712 178 621 The collective storehouses are almost all in ruins up to within the highest part of the Asif of the Seksaoua. One finds an agadir still in use only at Ikis, in the fraction /local kin group/ of the Ait Haddiyous. On the other hand, in the tribe of the Ida ou Mahmoud they have remained very numerous. In the fraction of the Ida ou Izimer /sic/, those of Ankoutouf, Tanout, Tizzirt, Annoums, and Tamjlojt are still occupied and maintained; those of Tanouzekt and Tagenza are in ruins (2).

2. Thus each village has its own in this fraction.

In the fraction of the Ait Tounert, one finds those of Talmakant and Assaka still usable, those of Oualamanon, Ouaraben, Takrekhout in ruins.

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343 712 [178] /305/ Among the Ichkajen Imi, a single agadir remains in use, that of Azar; another one, which is found at Arg, has been in ruins for eight years. Finally, there are still three occupied agadirs among the Ait Dris: those of Amassa, Tajelt Oufella, Meggount; others have been in ruins for a long time at Akhferga, Amdros, Kormad, and Kakt.

These agadirs are of two kinds. There are those that serve solely as storehouses, these are the most numerous; others are used both as storehouses and as réduits for defense in case of attack on the village. The latter are, in general, more spacious and have a rather extensive place in the interior, permitting the old men, women, children, and animals to stay in shelter while the able-bodied men occupy, for defense, the few storehouses pierced with battlements and the terraces. There is [312] always a cistern in the interior of these agadirs-fortresses. In this category are included the storehouses of Talmakant, Assaka, and Azar.

[333] In general the agadir is built with schist, which gives good slabs, rendering the construction easy: the stones are put together with a clay mortar. The walls are thick, blind, and high. The general shape is square or rectangular, except at Ikis, where [351] one finds an oval agadir. The terraces, jutting out, as everywhere in the mountains, are storied, given the slope of the terrain and the constant height of the walls. In the interior a series [417] of narrow passages gives access to the different storehouses; from these passages rise ladders formed simply by a tree trunk grooved with notches on which one places his feet. In front of the door of each storehouse situated in a story, a little platform projects out, which affords room for supporting the upper part of the ladder coming from below and for placing the lower part of the ladder, giving access to the higher story. These platforms are also useful to the owner of the storehouse for stopping before entering his room. Each chamber has only one door and no window.

343 712 124 We were unable to obtain information about any written rule of customary law concerning these agadirs. It is nevertheless practically certain that very old ones do exist, especially among

[671] [178]

343 /305 cont./
712 the Ida ou Mahmoud, and with a little patience and perserver-
124 ance it will be possible to see them. But the custom is known
[178] by all, and it is enough to interrogate the users in order to obtain the desired information and explanations concerning it.

/306/ Agadir of Ikis (1)

[621]

1. Ikis is a village of 55 hearths. It is at the same time the most important village of the subfraction of the Ait Haddiyous formed by Ikis and the Ida ou Gerioun villages.

(Figs. 1, 2, 3, 4 and Fig. 13). -- It includes 74 chambers on
[351] two or three stories; ten almond trees grow in the interior court-
[245] yard. In good condition, it has nevertheless not been utilized any more for ten years; it served for storing nuts, raisins, peaches, and almonds. The successive poor harvests caused by frosts on
[434] the one hand, the rise in the cost of living on the other hand,
[432] forced the natives to sell a greater quantity of their products on the souq /sook/ in order to procure cotton goods, sugar, tea, and cereals for themselves. The agadir has therefore been less useful these last years, but if a good harvest of fruits should happen, such as has not been seen for a long time, the collective storehouse would be utilized anew.

[423] The agadir is the common property of the people of Ikis.
[621] Each of them owns, by virtue of ancient rights, one, two, or
[432] three chambers; ten years ago, when the storehouse was in use,
[426] some chambers were sold -- very rarely -- or mortgaged. Each owner has the keys to his chambers. In calm periods the key to the entrance gate was deposited with the fqih of the mosque, who entrusted it to the users in case of need. In troubled periods
343 two guards were placed at the agadir. They were furnished by
712 the owners in turn, according to the number of chambers that
625 they owned, or then again they continued to stay and were then paid by all the users. The agadir, situated 300 meters from the

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343 712 [625] village, happened to be at the center of a cirque forming a resonator, the guards would hear any suspicious noises; in this case they would fire a few gunshots and help would arrive from the village; the prowlers would then run away. No one remembers that a theft has been committed in this agadir.

Agadir of Ankoutouf (Figs. 6, 7 and Fig. 14). -- It has 90 chambers, 60 of which are used, and three stories. It is especially well constructed and maintained. It is the agadir of the [621] village of Ankoutouf (48 hearths). Each hearth owns one to [423] three chambers; property deeds attest to these rights. Four [628] rooms are mortgaged, for a price that goes from 8 to 15 douros, [426] to some natives of Tizza, a village that does not have an agadir.

Each owner has the key to his rooms. The guard, who lives 343 712 625 inside the agadir with his family, has the key to the outer gate. He is appointed for a year as a rule and is changed in October; in general /307/ /Figs. 1 and 2 appear here/ /308 is blank/ /309/ /Figs. 3 and 4 appear here/ /310 is blank/ /311/ he [465] stays longer if people are satisfied with his services. He receives a rba of barley per year and per occupied chamber. In case of 343 712 685 625 theft, the thief, if he is discovered, repays the amount of the theft and pays 50 douros as a fine. The responsibility of the guard is involved only if the theft was committed after breaking open the outer gate -- and in this case it is he who repays the amount of the theft and pays 50 douros as a fine; but if the thief found his way in through a breach made in the wall, the guard is not troubled. The fine is divided among the owners of the rooms. Since no check is made of the quantities stored in the rooms, the victim must, in case of theft, swear along with 24 coswearers in order to certify what has been taken from him.

343 712 [621] Agadir of Tanout (Fig. 5 and Fig. 15). -- Belongs to the village of Tanout (57 hearths). It contains 70 chambers on two or three stories. The two borjs /lookout towers/ are empty.

Same interior arrangements and operation as at Ankoutouf.

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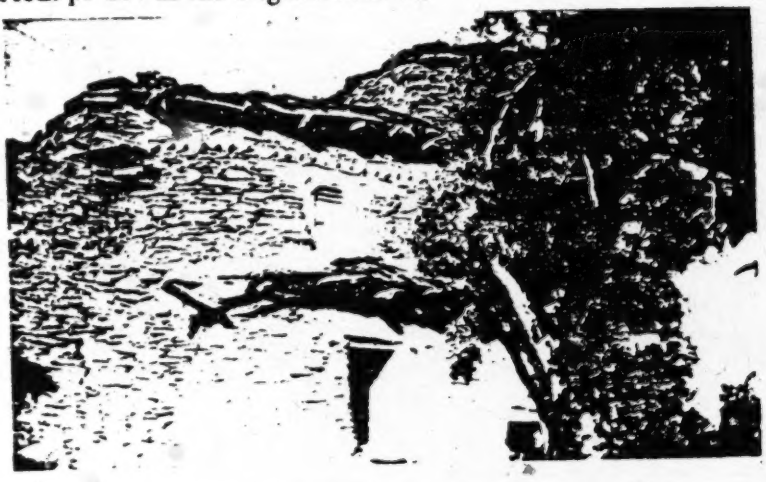

Fig. 1. -- Agadir of Ikis. Surrounding wall.

Fig. 2. -- Agadir of Ikis. Entrance gate.

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Fig. 3. -- Agadir of Ikis. Interior view.

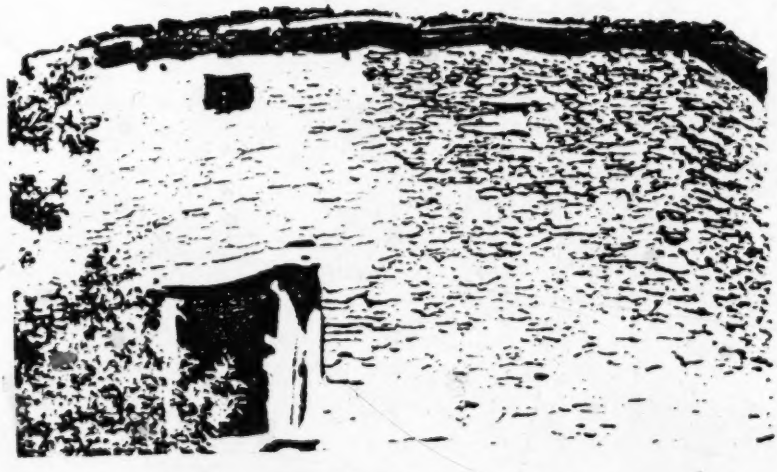

Fig. 4. -- Agadir of Ikis. Interior view.

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343 712 621 423 625 [562] Agadir of Tizzirt (Fig. 19). -- Belongs to the village of Tizzirt (50 hearths). Certain inhabitants own up to five chambers there.

Same arrangements and operation as at Ankoutouf.

The guard is usually a man. As an exception, this job was entrusted to a widow in 1928.

Agadir of Annoums (Fig. 8 and Fig. 20). -- It belongs to the village of Annoums (65 hearths).

[465] [685] [184] Five stories, all 80 chambers occupied; the guard receives a kharrouba of barley per chamber and per year. In case of theft, the custom is the same as for the agadir of Ankoutouf.

Agadir of Tamjlojt (Fig. 21). -- It belongs to the village of Tamjlojt (45 hearths). Sixty rooms, four stories. The guard receives one tmen of barley and one kharrouba of maize per room [465] and per year. As an exception, this post was given to a woman [562] last year.

Agadir of Talmakant (Fig. 16). -- It belongs to the village of Talmakant (40 hearths) and comprises 52 large rooms on two stories. It can serve both as storehouse and as réduit for defense [312] in case of attack, because of its cistern and its interior arrangement.

[682] /312/ It is in ruins in part; it has not been used any more for 25 to 30 years because an assassination was committed there.

Agadir of Assaka (Fig. 17). -- Like the preceding one, it served both as storehouse and as fortress.

[669] It was destroyed in part following internal struggles in 1925, and it is planned to put it back into condition. It serves at pres- [727] ent to shelter the numerous exiles who returned to the tribe after the submission and found their houses demolished.

Agadir of Azar (Fig. 18). -- It belongs to the village of Azar (28 hearths).

It normally serves as storehouse and in troubled times as fortress. The rooms are mortgaged for 5 to 20 douros. The [465] guard, changed every year, collects a kharrouba of barley, one kharrouba of maize, and a pound of almonds.

/312 cont./

343 712 685 In case of theft, if the thief is discovered, he must, irrespective of the punitive sanction that is imposed on him by the amghar /leader/ of the fraction, indemnify his victims. If the theft was committed through a hole made in the wall and if the thief is not discovered, the village in the midst of which the agadir is built is held responsible and must indemnify the victims [625] of the theft. If the theft was committed after breaking open the entrance gate, the guard is held responsible, must indemnify the victims of the theft. The latter must bring 24 coswearers in order to certify the quantities that they declare was stolen from them.

343 712 Agadir of Amassa (Figs. 10, 11, 22). -- It belongs to the people of Amassa (80 hearths), contains 80 chambers, 3 of [621] which are on the fifth story, all are utilized; most of the doors [423] are painted and worked. A room is mortgaged for 10 to 50 [426] douros and is sold for up to 100. The guard receives a kharrouba [432] of barley per year and per room, except for three rooms on the [625] fifth story, which pay nothing. In addition, the guard is fed, as [465] the fqih of the mosque is at the present time in Berber country. He is supplied with three meals a day, each owner taking his [685] day in turn. The three rooms on the fifth pay nothing, but in return they have no right to indemnity in case of theft.

[358] Each owner is obliged to make the repairs necessary to maintain his room in good condition. Thus the owner of one /313/ /Figs. 5 and 6 appear here/ /314 is blank/ /315/ /Figs. 7 and 8 appear here/ /316 is blank/ /317/ /Figs. 9 and 10 appear here/ /318 is blank/ /319/ /Figs. 11 and 12 appear here/ /320 is blank/ /321/ chamber may take action against the one of the one below, if it should happen to collapse, or against the one of the room above, if it lets water coming from the terrace [685] leak through. In case of theft, the custom is the same as for [184] the agadir of Ankoutouf.

[621] Agadir of Tajelt Oufella (Fig. 12 and Fig. 23). -- It be- [423] longs to the village of Tajelt Oufella (33 hearths). It comprises 60 rooms and four stories.

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Fig. 5. -- Agadir of Tanout (Ida ou Izimmer), entrance gate.

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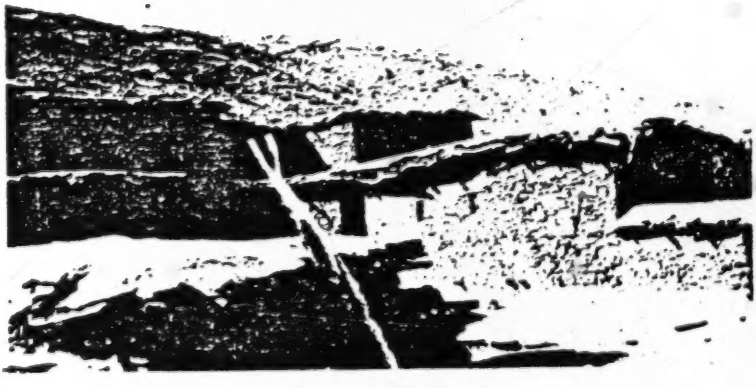

Fig. 6. -- Agadir of Tanout. The terraces.

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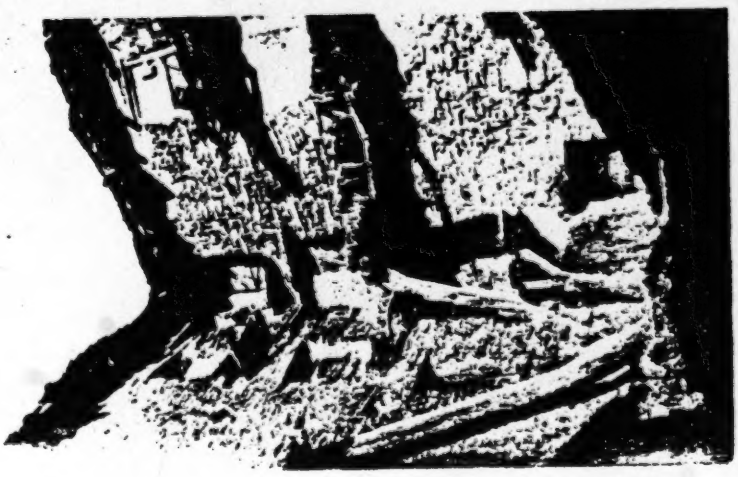

Fig. 8. -- Agadir of Annoums (Ida ou Izimmer). Interior.

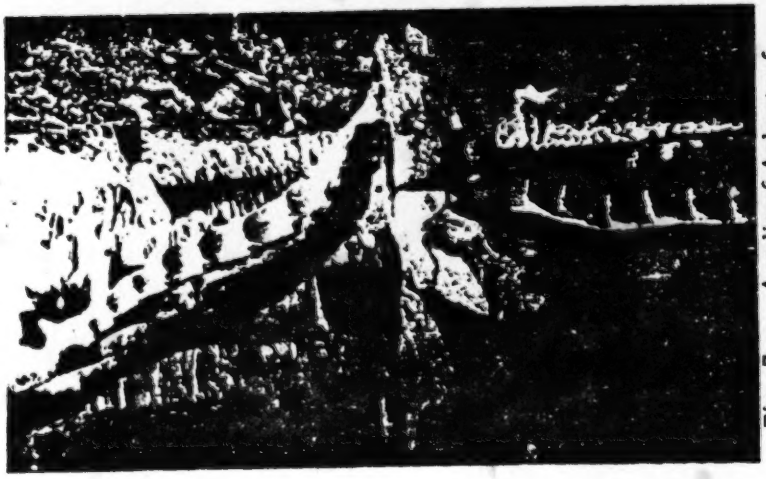

Fig. 7. -- Agadir of Ankoutouf. Interior.

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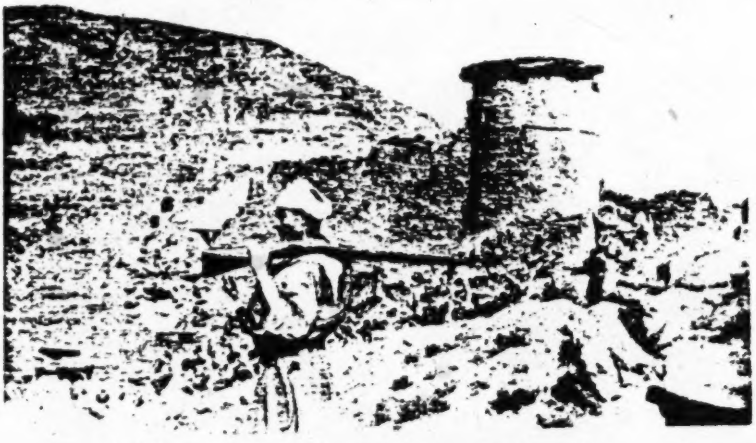

Fig. 9. -- Agadir of Amdros (Ait Dris).

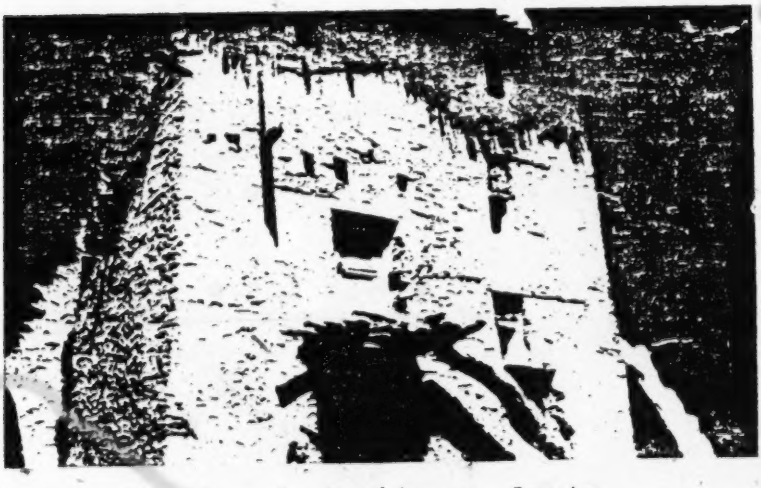

Fig. 10. -- Agadir of Amassa. Interior.

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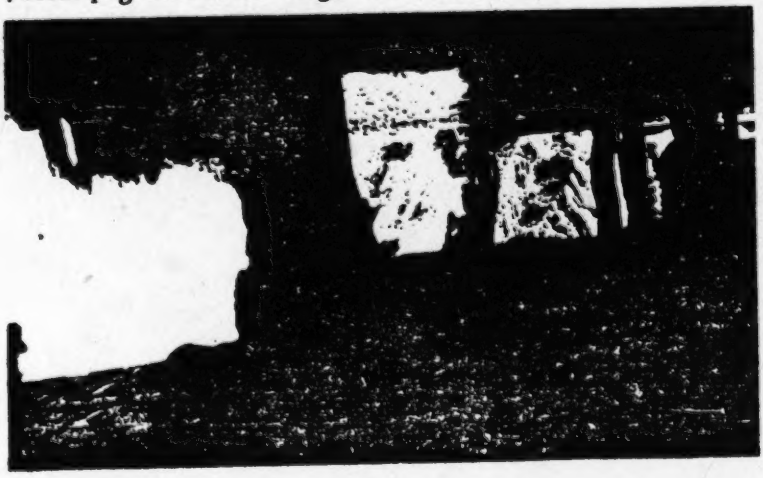

Fig. 12. -- Agadir of Tajelt Oufella (Ait Dris).

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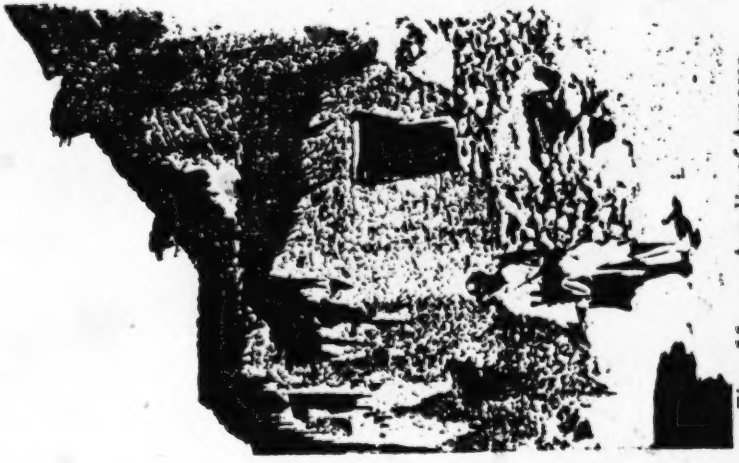

Fig. 11. -- Agadir of Amassa (Ait Dris).

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343 712 625 [465] The guard is a volunteer who remains as long as he wishes, if the users are satisfied with his services. Every year he is given a half-kharrouba of barley per room, utilized or not; furthermore, he is fed by the owners of the chambers. A turn is established as follows: if there are three rooms in height, each owner in turn guarantees 3 meals a day; if there are four rooms in height, the owners of the highest and lowest ones together guarantee a day; the following day it is the owners of the middle chambers. [358] [184] The same rules as at Amassa are followed for the respective responsibility of the users in case of collapse or the infiltration of water. The guard is responsible only for thefts committed [685] after a break through the outer gate, not for those that have been made through a breach in the wall. The thief, if he is discovered, repays the amount of the theft and gives a cow that is divided among the owners, taking into account the number of chambers; the same rule is applied against the guard, if he is responsible. The victims of the theft provide 24 coswearers.

343 712 621 423 358 [685] [184] Agadir of Meggount (Fig. 24). -- It belongs to the inhabitants of the village of Meggount (80 hearths). The rules for its operation are the same as at Tajelt Oufella in what concerns poor maintenance and theft.

In all these collective storehouses, if repairs concerning the agadir itself and not only one room become necessary, all the co-owners are jointly liable. They carry out the work in common and, according to the number of shops they occupy, bear the costs caused by this repair, for the purchase of wood, the salary of the workers, or any other expenditure.

Imi n Tanout, 15 March 1928.
Lieutenant Pierre Dupas.

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Fig. 13. -- Agadir of Ikis.

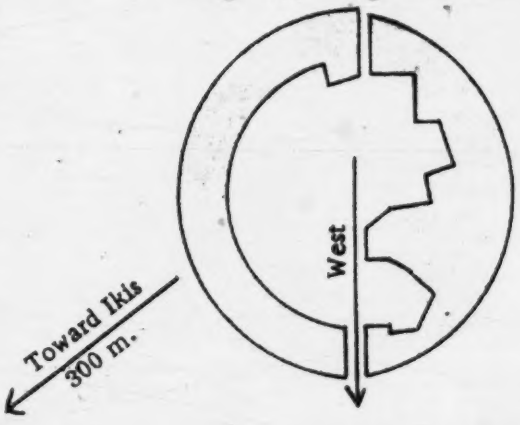

Fig. 14. -- Agadir of Ankoutouf.

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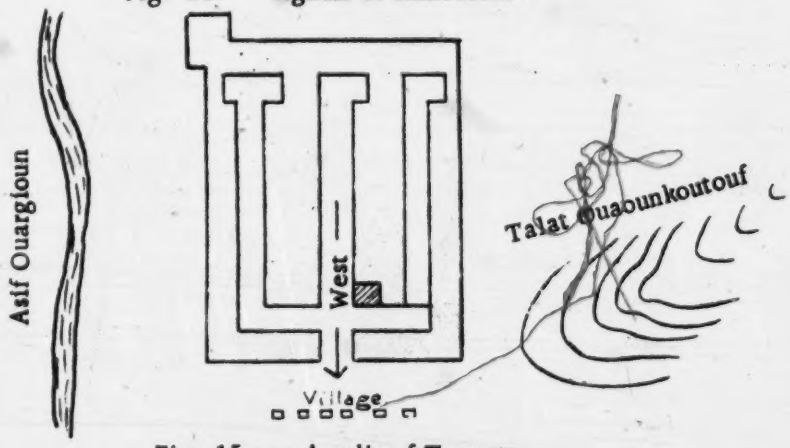

Fig. 15. -- Agadir of Tanout.

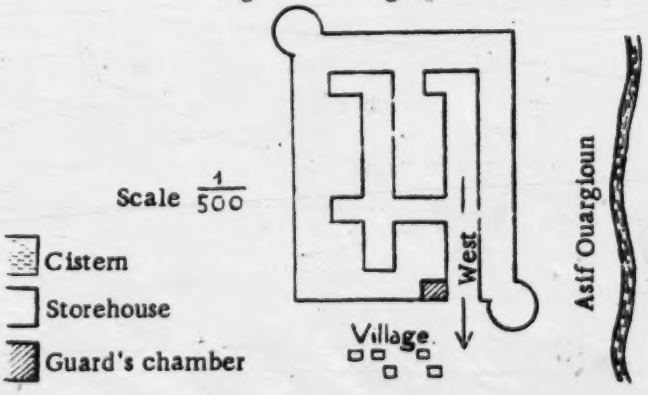

Fig. 16. -- Agadir of Talmakant.

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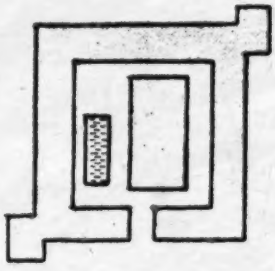

Fig. 17. -- Agadir of Assaka.

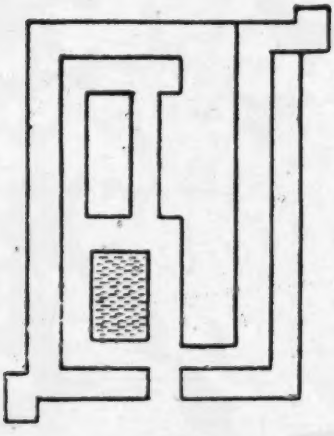

Fig. 18. -- Agadir of Azar.

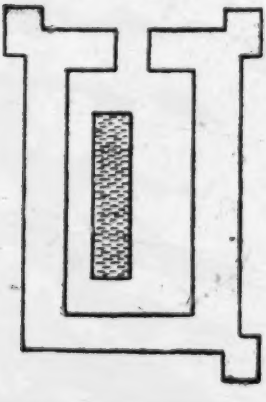

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Fig. 19. -- Agadir of Tizzirt.

Fig. 22. -- Agadir of Amassa.

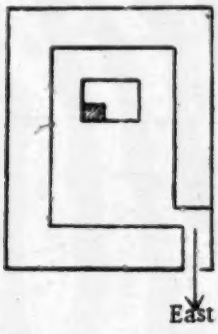

Fig. 20. -- Agadir of Annoums.

Fig. 23. -- Agadir of Tajelt Oufella.

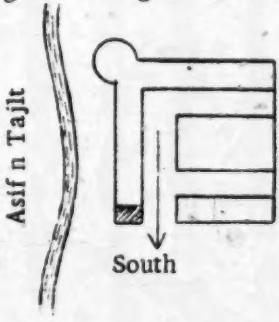

Fig. 24. -- Agadir of Meggount.

Fig. 21. -- Agadir of Tamjlojt.